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ABSTRACT

This document presents tips to help Ohio's adult basic education (ABE) and literacy education professionals publicize new and existing ABE and literacy education programs. Chapter 1 discusses the following topics related to using newspapers to publicize ABE and literacy programs: publication policies of daily and weekly newspapers; news releases, editorial columns, and letters to the editor; tips for writing news releases; and the anatomy of a news release. Chapter 2, which explores radio and television as means for publicizing ABE and literacy programs, includes information on the following communication formats: media lists, radio advertising, public service announcements, radio news shows, and local broadcast and cable interview and public affairs programs. Chapter 3 begins with detailed guidelines for preparing for an interview, explains the differences between feature and news interviews, and offers suggestions for dealing with bad publicity and questions from reporters who are unfamiliar with ABE and literacy education. Chapter 4 presents suggestions for using the following ways of publicizing ABE and literacy programs: fliers; billboards; brochures; bulletins; bus-related advertising; classified ads; movie theater ads; posters; table tents, place mats/tray liners, and pizza boxes; World Wide Web sites; and presentations to civic and community groups. (MN)

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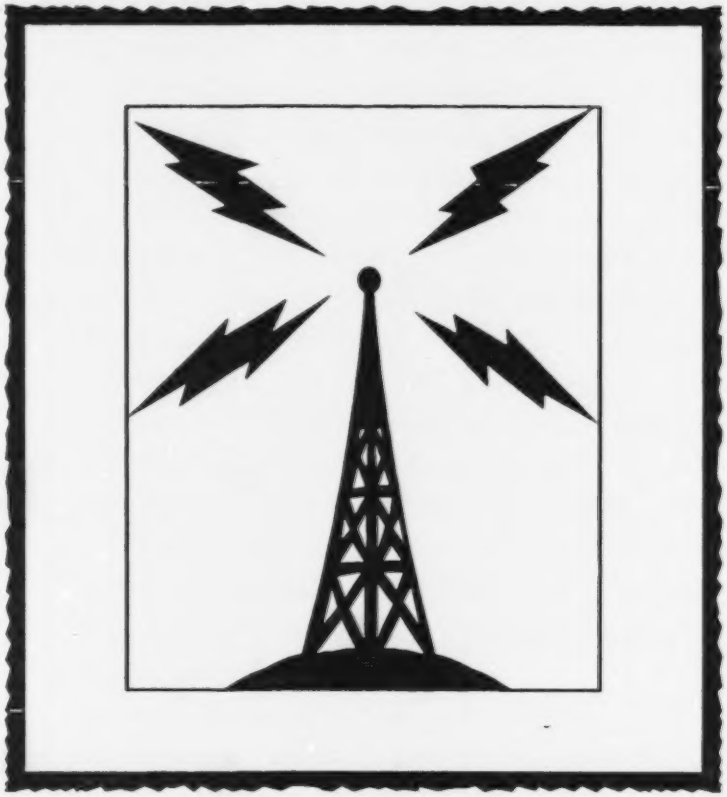
Getting the Word Out



communication tips for adult basic & literacy education professionals

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—Newspapers—

Getting Publicity, Getting Started

Something that you already know, but something worth considering: there are different types of newspapers, and different newspapers publish different types of pieces.

—Daily Newspapers—

- × The newspaper that appears on your doorstep every morning, that you grumble about over coffee, the *daily newspaper.*
- × Daily newspapers cover so-called "hard news." They use wire services such as the Associated Press or United Press International for national and international news and they have a number of reporters to cover local stories.
- ⇒ Most likely to accept: editorials, letters to the editor.

—Weekly Newspapers—

- × *Weekly newspapers* as a rule have a much more local focus than dailies. They are generally understaffed and short of cash (sound familiar?), usually with few reporters.
- × Most weeklies are "community" papers, focusing on local events and organizations, while some (primarily in larger cities) focus on so-called "alternative" news stories.
- ⇒ Most likely to accept: news releases

As a rule, weeklies *won't* have AP hook-ups or many reporters, and therefore they will frequently publish well-written news releases they receive. Community newspapers, the most frequent targets of our organizations' news releases, are interested in services offered to their community, and hey-hey!, service to the community is exactly what your program offers.

Daily newspapers almost never publish unsolicited news releases. Their reporters would be out of a job if they did! However, if your organization is holding an event or receiving an award, a news release may be an effective way of notifying a daily newspaper of the event as a possible topic for a story they might cover.

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—Using Provided Materials—

These places get a lot of mail, and with a lot of mail comes a lot of junk. Solicitations of up-to-the-minute meteorological services are sent to weekly community newspapers that don't even *have* a weather section; daily newspapers in Cincinnati get press releases announcing a meeting of the Quilting Club of Kenosha, Wisconsin. So although these places receive an awful lot of mail, that is not to say that they receive all that much printable news. A well-written piece can be like manna for deadline-nervous managing editors, and often they'll simply hand the release off to an intern and, *voila!*, you've made the paper.

News releases:

News releases are a good way to provide program information or to announce an upcoming event. You will stand a better chance of being published if your news release *looks* official, so follow the format for news releases:

- News releases should go on your program's letterhead, with contact information (name and phone number) in the upper right-hand corner.
- The "release date" goes in the upper left-hand corner. Release dates are useful if you are sending the release out more than two weeks before its pertinent date—and, as you might expect, it's better to be early than late. In general, you will simply put "For Immediate Release" in the upper left.
- Separate pages with "# # #" and write "-end-" at the news release's end.

NOTE: See "Anatomy of a News Release" on page 6.

Editorial columns:

Editorial columns are an excellent way to provide an in-depth look at one of the issues surrounding adult literacy education. Call the newspaper's editor before submitting an editorial column to ask if they accept guest editorials, and then ask for guidelines for the proper form of a submission.

Letters to the Editor:

Letters to the Editor provide a short argument for one of your program's positions, in everything from very broad to very specific terms. Letters to the editor should be sent out in normal letter format on your program's letterhead.

When to send:

- Most weekly papers provide rolling deadlines for submission, but earlier is almost always better.
- Allow about a week in advance for letters to the editor.
- Call ahead by at least two weeks to inquire about guest editorial columns.

Important: Don't send the same letter or editorial to different newspapers, but it's acceptable and advisable to send the same news releases to everybody in town!

—Writing a News Release—

News stories follow a pattern called the "inverted pyramid." The most important information goes at the top, while less essential information is put at the bottom. Editors use the inverted pyramid so they can easily cut parts of a story so that it fits in the space they have available.

- *The Lead* is the first paragraph and is the most important part of the story. It generally takes care of answering the six-point program of who, what, where, when, why, how. The lead is often one sentence long and never more than three.
- *The Bridge* moves the reader from the lead into the body—that is, from the eye-catching, information front-loading first sentences into the more casually paced prose of the rest of the article.
- *The Body* explains information given in the lead and provides details supporting the story as it was described in the lead. Quotes from your spokesperson can be included here.
- At the end of the story, provide a short (usually one-sentence) offer of "more information" with your organization's phone number.

Any questions? Comments? Email Rob Mentzer at robertmentzer@msn.com or call the Ohio Literacy Network at 1-800-228-7323

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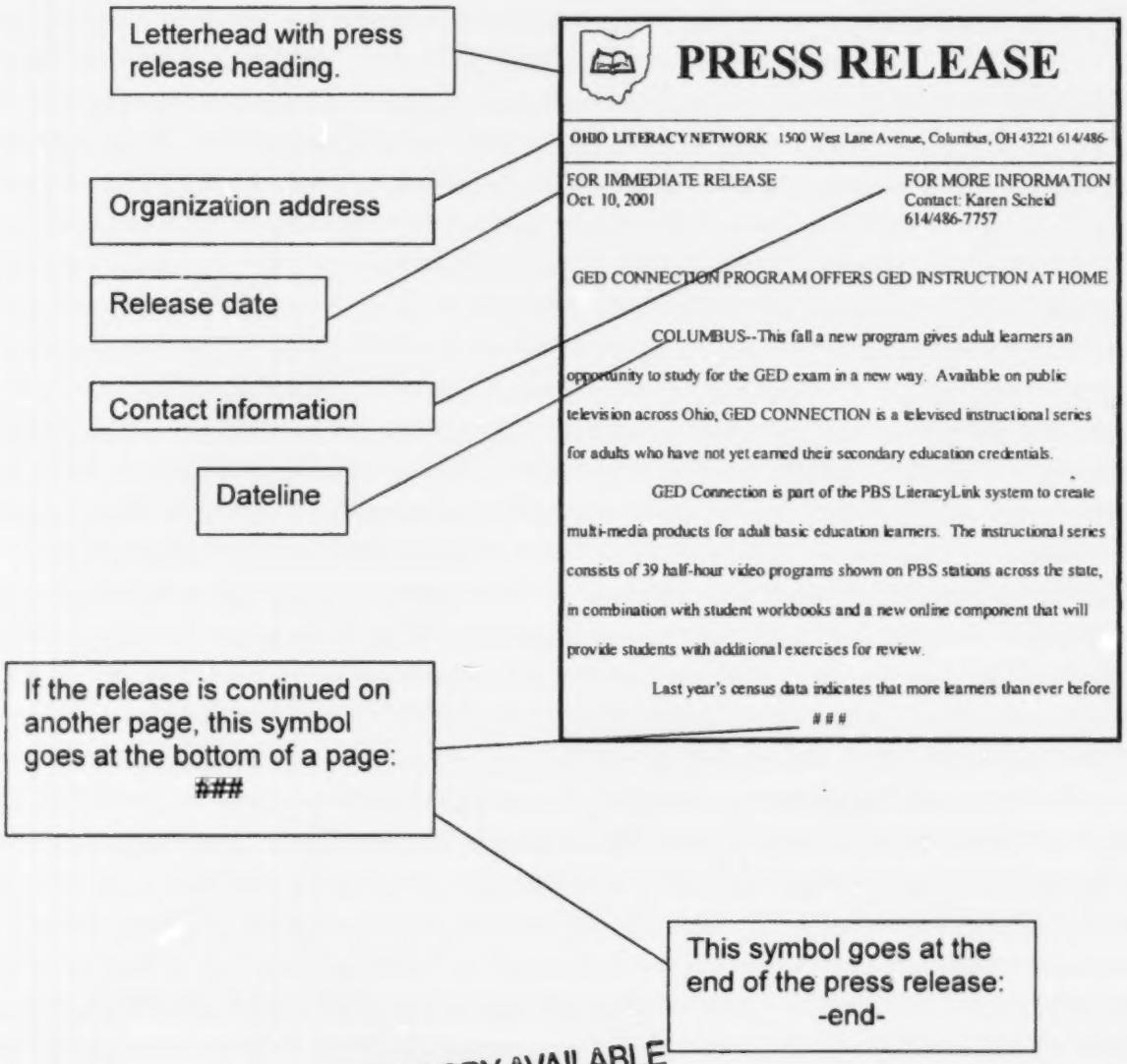
—Anatomy of a News Release—

Here's a sample news release, sent out by OLN to promote GED on TV.


Letterhead with press release heading.
Organization address
Release date
Contact information
Dateline
If the release is continued on another page, this symbol goes at the bottom of a page:
###
This symbol goes at the end of the press release:
-end-
PRESS RELEASE
OHIO LITERACY NETWORK 1500 West Lane Avenue, Columbus, OH 43221 614/486-
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Oct. 10, 2001
FOR MORE INFORMATION
Contact: Karen Scheid
614/486-7757
GED CONNECTION PROGRAM OFFERS GED INSTRUCTION AT HOME
COLUMBUS--This fall a new program gives adult learners an opportunity to study for the GED exam in a new way. Available on public television across Ohio, GED CONNECTION is a televised instructional series for adults who have not yet earned their secondary education credentials.
GED Connection is part of the PBS LiteracyLink system to create multi-media products for adult basic education learners. The instructional series consists of 39 half-hour video programs shown on PBS stations across the state, in combination with student workbooks and a new online component that will provide students with additional exercises for review.
Last year's census data indicates that more learners than ever before
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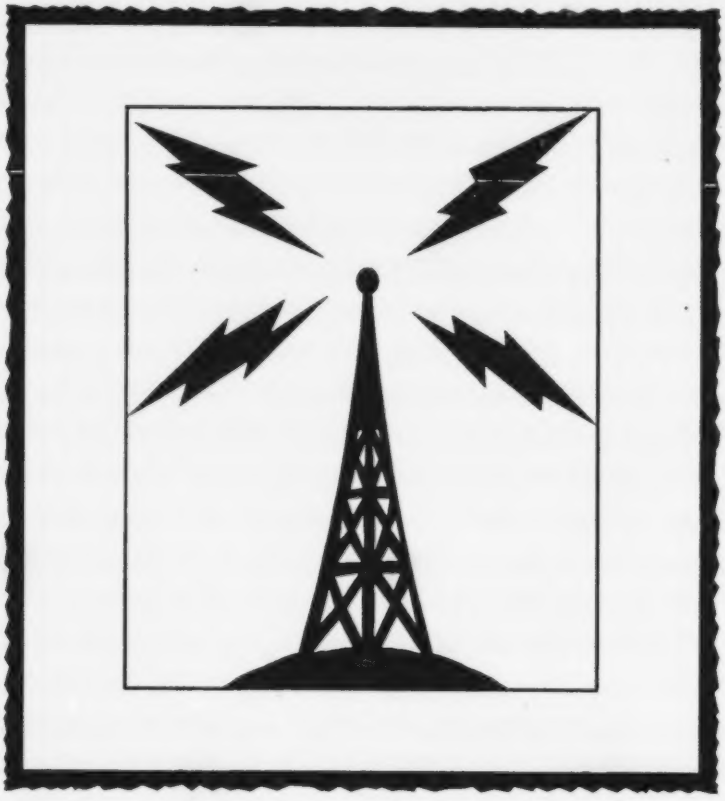
Getting the Word Out



communication tips for adult basic & literacy education professionals

OHIO LITERACY NETWORK

chapter two

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—Radio & Television—

Radio:

Though it's probably the most underutilized of media outlets, radio is omnipresent—people have radios on at home, at work, in stores, on public transportation and in their cars. Radio's reach is even broader than the reach of television or newspapers: no one watches television or reads newspapers *by accident*, yet every day people (as on public transportation or at work) listen to radio stations that they didn't choose to listen to. A sharp public service announcement on the radio can really prick up the ears of people we hope to reach. So *use the radio* for your marketing efforts!

The Media List:

Start by developing a media list of radio stations in your area. Call letters, frequency, AM/FM, and *format*. This last will be particularly important as you consider which populations you're trying to reach. Find out who mostly listens to the station, and what opportunities it offers for publicity. All radio stations run commercials and PSAs, many have local news, some have interview or public affairs programming.

Something helpful: An increasing portion of funding for public radio stations comes from sponsorship by major foundations and corporations (the "This program is made possible by..." blurb on the radio). Many stations now take single-day sponsorship for considerably less money—usually about $250 for eight mentions throughout the day. Your name and a short message is announced throughout the day you've sponsored. This can be extremely useful for publicity on the day before an event, or as a volunteer recruitment tool.

Two things to remember about media personnel:

The first: They don't know unless we tell them. They are busy people, and they can't possibly keep up with all the possible stories. At daily and weekly newspapers as well as at radio stations, news releases and press advisories are vital. The world is not a place where the most important things (stories, subjects, causes) float to the top on their own.

The second: In journalism, the style dictates that the writing be accessible to someone with *no prior knowledge* at all. That's why recent obituaries for George Harrison helpfully explained that he was a "member of the 60s rock group, the Beatles," as if we'd never heard of them. The upshot of journalistic style, then, is that any time your program is mentioned, a short explanation of the services you provide will also be included in the story; and sometimes even your phone number.

Which is to say: The news stories you release to the press are only *partly* about the news event they announce; they're also about getting the name of your program and the services you offer out into the river of public discourse.

Advertising on Radio:

Any advertising costs money. To buy an ad on a major radio station will cost about $1,000 for anywhere from 15 to 30 "spots" (airings of your commercial) from morning to evening. One of these ads will probably reach about 30,000 people. They are also well targeted—the demographics of listeners to a particular radio station tend to be narrower than a TV station's.

Keep in mind that the expense of running a commercial of any kind includes both the cost of buying the air time as well as the cost of *producing* the commercial—recording, editing, and so on. The benefit of buying commercial time on the radio rather than submitting a PSA is that you can control the time that your message will be aired.

Public Service Announcements:

Public service announcements (PSAs) are simple and are like little commercials for nonprofits. By themselves they can generate a lot of interest, and often the only thing you need to provide is a script. Some stations prefer that you provide them with a taped announcement, but more stations accept script PSAs. The PSA is then either read live or a short spot is produced by the station.

Radio News:

Many radio stations, even those that are not mostly talk, run short news segments. Find out if local radio stations have a news department and who the contact person would be, then send them the same press releases you send to the newspapers. If the station decides to run one of your stories, it may call you to obtain a quote over the phone. It is a good idea to have a few points prepared: keep a favorite statistic or two by your telephone, along with some general talking points for discussion.

Interview and public affairs programs:

Some radio stations host in-depth interview programs, providing the opportunity to speak about your program and issues related to adult education in a serious way and at some length. You might also consider having one or more students from your program speak about their experiences. Call the station and inquire about their interview programming, offering yourself and your program as possible topics.

Anything new is news.
Some newsworthy events:

- ⇒ An award, any award. And, by the way, it is absolutely acceptable to make up an award yourself & then publicize it.
- ⇒ A student's success story. Some programs have had a lot of success in publicizing the success stories of students who are veterans.
- ⇒ Recognition of a teacher, tutor, or the program as a whole
- ⇒ Addition of facilities or equipment: new computers, for instance. "[YOUR PROGRAM] expands services" would make a great headline. Exactly how great or how small an expansion it was is less important.
- ⇒ Initiation of a new project
- ⇒ An anniversary or a milestone of some sort for your program
- ⇒ Announcement of new private sector partnerships or alliances with other service projects.

Television:

TV's appeal is very wide, and since people achieve a brainwave pattern equivalent to hypnotic trance when they watch TV, they are extremely suggestible. Since the average American household watches TV a staggering (& not a little depressing) *seven hours per day*, it is no wonder that buying time on TV is expensive. A daytime package on network TV probably includes between 20 & 43 spots and costs between $1,300 and $2,100. On the other hand, you can reach 100,000 people or more with them. (Note: FOX affiliates or cable channels may offer significantly less expensive packages.)

Paying for commercial time (on radio or TV) may or may not be worth the expense, and if you choose to invest this way, be prepared for a blitzkrieg calls-drive.

Beyond that, television broadcasting is similar in many ways to radio broadcasting—participating in interview programs, for example—and the strategies for incorporating TV into your marketing and publicity plans are similar, as well. Oh, there is one difference: TV includes *pictures* as well as sounds. Maybe we should discuss that.

Opportunities on television:

- ⇒ News programs
- ⇒ Public affairs programs
- ⇒ Talk shows
- ⇒ Feature segments
- ⇒ Public Service announcements
- ⇒ Local cable television shows and public access TV
- ⇒ Those scrolling community calendars they have on public-access channels—people read those!

Because television involves moving images, the camera crews that tape the images that will show up on the nightly news or in commercials or whatever would like to make good use of that capability. Television people want chaos, movement, colors, ambience—more target's for the camera's eye. If you invite TV news to see your new computer facilities, for example, the best time for them to come is when people are *using* those computers, preferably more than one person per machine. If you're highlighting your tutoring or teaching capabilities, have cameras pointed *at the classes*, over the shoulders of tutors.

PSAs:

Like radio stations, TV stations must run PSAs. Unlike radio, you will usually be expected to supply a ready-to-air PSA spot. On occasion, though, the TV stations will produce the spot for you, and it cannot hurt to ask.

News Programs:

Local news is often very feature-oriented, so an alliance with them can be extremely beneficial. A feature story is one that is not necessarily breaking news, but more just a sort of spotlight on some organization, person, event in

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the community. Some sort of news "hook" is useful, of course (see ideas for newsworthy events on the preceding page), but not *always* necessary. It's a good idea to make the television news people aware of your program with a press advisory and a follow-up call, and then to remind them of your existence from time to time, independently of events you might hold.

Always extend an invitation to the television people for any of your events—graduation ceremonies, recognitions, parades. Inform them well in advance of the event, and then make a follow-up call on the day before, preferably earlier in the day so they're not caught up with that day's deadlines.

TV news is also about sound bites, more so even than radio news. Do a little bit of thinking about what you'll say before you're interviewed—it's even more important to avoid lengthy explanations and extraneous details on TV than elsewhere.

Radio = no pictures. Television = moving pictures.
Both = a good way to get the word out about your program.

A few things that you should not think or say to yourself about television & radio promotion and the reasons why you should neither think nor say them:

"No one listens to/watches this show."

BECAUSE → That only means **you** don't listen to or watch it; you might be surprised how many people do.

"Our promotion will probably only be aired during the wee hours and therefore it won't do any good"

BECAUSE → Even if the first part turns out to be true, the conclusion does **not** follow from its premise. Lots of people are up in the wee hours, some only then.

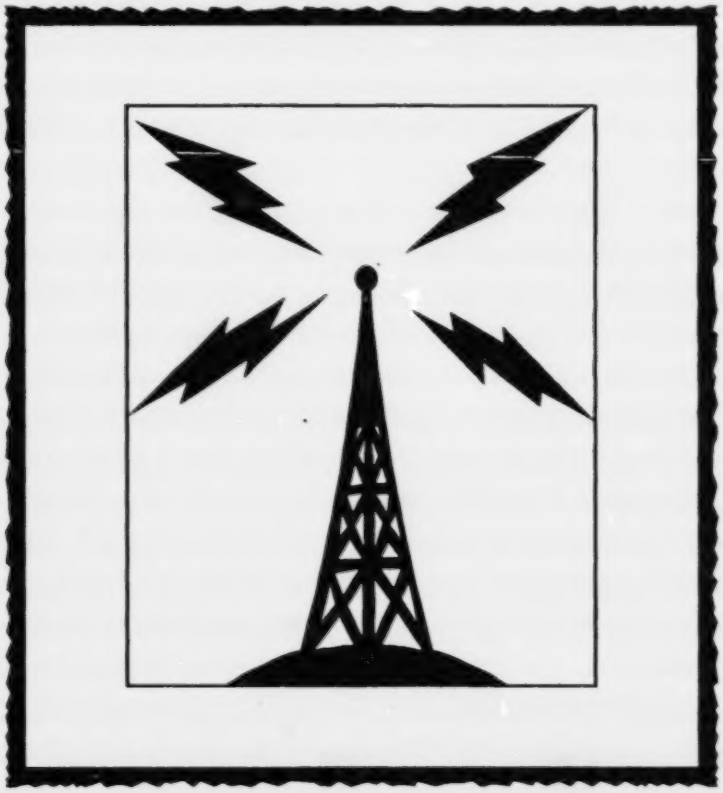
"No one listens to college/small radio stations." or "No one watches those cable-access stations."

BECAUSE → It's sort of like the first one and equally untrue. Smaller radio stations & college stations play the best music & it's often easier to start a relationship with them.

"This is going to take up a lot of time I don't have."

BECAUSE → It won't, really. PSAs, for example, may take up no more than a phone call. TV & radio stations, after all, need something to broadcast, just like newspapers need something to print. And once a few solid media alliances are in place, you may find, as some programs have, that future promotional ideas will begin to form practically on their own.

Getting the Word Out



communication tips for adult basic & literacy education professionals

OHIO LITERACY NETWORK

chapter three

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—Interviews—

Preparing for an Interview, Talking to the Media

The media's job is to take *events* and turn them into *stories*: to make narratives out of things that happen. A story in a newspaper or on the radio shapes a narrative out of an event by presenting pertinent facts, leaving out impertinent facts, and quoting people who have an interesting perspective on the subject (experts, eyewitnesses, men- & women-on-the-street).

People who are going into an interview of any kind (including a job interview) wrack their brains with countless variations on two basic questions—*What types of questions will I be asked? How should I answer them?*

To answer these questions, it can be helpful to remember this: since the news is basically made up of little stories, the way to be a successful interview subject is to help form a coherent, interesting story. In the adult literacy field, there are characters, there is adversity, there is triumph—all the qualities that make a good story. The more you can **humanize** these, the better you'll do.

The Mission Statement:

In pretty much every case, in one form or another, you will be expected to explain what you do. And exactly what *do* you do? Have a clear, repeatable mission statement that answers this question in a concise and somewhat neutral way (no overreaching adjectives). Say, for example, "Our organization provides instruction to adult students seeking instruction at all levels of literacy education, including basic skills and GED instruction."

It's not a slogan, and it should be both longer and more informative than a slogan. However, the whole idea of having this type of statement is that it is *repeatable*, so it should be short enough to allow word-for-word repetition. In any interview, this statement is a good beginning point, and if it starts to sound like a rote

Several scenarios that could put you in front of a reporter's microphone:

1.) A feature story is being written about your program, perhaps a community-interest story.

2.) A news story is being written about your program: you are featured specifically because of an "occasion": you've received an award, or that massive increase in funding that is surely just around the corner.

3.) Either (1) or (2) has made you the feature of an interview program on radio or TV.

4.) Your viewpoint is being sought for a related story; your opinion will not be the focus but will "round out" the story.

repetition, slow down when you say it. (For that matter, slow down *whenever* you're being interviewed. Focus on the information you're conveying and allow for a natural flow of ideas.)

Talking Points:

It's a good idea to develop some "talking points" about general topics or hot spots. Find a favorite statistic, something that's easily quotable, and have it at your fingertips (literally: put it down on paper and keep it near your phone). For any interview, try forming **three main points** to guide your thinking as well as the things you say. For example, for a feature story, you might think about:

1.) Your program's impact on individual learners and their stories
2.) Your program's impact in the community and state- or nationwide.
3.) Volunteer opportunities offered and the experience of volunteers in your program.

Grouping your thoughts into three categories—rather than four or two—is somewhat arbitrary, maybe, and certainly there are other ways to think about the organization of your comments during an interview. The point of designating three as the magic number, is to organize your thoughts by forming broad but distinct categories.

Important tip:

For *all* news stories and *all* interviews, make sure that you at least offer the reporter a chance to talk to one of the **students** of your program. One or two lines from a person who has achieved a personal goal as a result of the help of your program will be more valuable than any amount of the indirect testimony you can give. Why? Because (to the ears of a reporter or the average reader of the newspaper, at least) when *you* talk about your program, you're just talking about your job. But your students, when they talk about their experiences, are talking about their *lives*.

Here's a what-not-to-do story from the (brief) period of time when I worked as a reporter: I was assigned a story on a trick-biking exhibition that was coming to town. The show promised to be exciting—ramps were being set up, jumps were going to occur, high-in-the-air backflips were scheduled. The owner of the bike shop was rightly enthusiastic about the show, and I wanted to convey his enthusiasm in my story.

"What types of tricks will the show include?" I asked.

"Oh, anything and everything," he said. "They really do some great stuff."

"But are there any *particular* tricks that are your favorite?" I said.

"Let me tell you, the tricks they do are just amazing."

"Right. But are there any specific crowd favorites?"

"The crowd just loves all of them."

And while what he was saying may have been true, it made for rather vague copy, and thus it made a less interesting story. In any narrative—in fiction, journalism, interview-programs and others—specificity rules. A single specific detail conveys information better than the most enthusiastic broad-stroke. In the literacy field, that maxim translates into this: a single learner's story, told in some detail (where she works, how her life has changed) will almost always be more effective than more general statements about "learners" and "the program."

There are two types of interviews: feature interviews and news interviews.

Feature interviews:

This type of story—on radio, TV, or for the paper—is distinctly positive and community-oriented. It is often triggered by a press release that you sent to the media. Feature stories feature your program: they explain what you do, get quotes from students and teachers, talk about your record of adversity and triumph. They generally include a brief history of the program, a brief discussion of the broader social issues that you deal with, and a somewhat more detailed discussion of what happens at the program from day to day. Feature stories are a showcase for your program.

A feature story may be triggered by a news event, but the news event is likely to serve as simply a lead-in to the feature. The purpose of a feature story, after all, is to tell the public about people/places/things of interest. That your program is chosen for a feature means someone thought your work was important enough to warrant public interest. It is polite to write a thank-you note to the reporter and the media outlet for featuring your program.

Tip: When a reporter calls you to set up a time to interview you for a feature story, it is a good idea to send additional materials to that reporter in advance of the interview: program brochures, descriptions of special initiatives and events, fact sheets, etc. Reporters appreciate the extra information, and will often shape the questions that they ask around the materials that you've provided.

News interviews:

Usually related to specific occurrences, news interviews may revolve around a single topic or event. But let's remember the wisdom known to all essay-test-takers: if you don't like the question, answer the question you wish you'd been asked. As a reporter has his or her agenda for the interview, so too you have yours. A news interview *is* a feature interview, at least in part. News interviews will tend to be shorter and perhaps more impersonal, but nevertheless many of the same rules from above apply.

Dealing with the Bad Stuff:

Not all publicity is good publicity. It seems worthwhile to address the rare and unpleasant occasion of a hostile interview, a story that is being written not as a positive feature of your program but a negative one. When you receive a call and you're not sure what you're being called about, first assume that things are good, that this will be positive publicity. And second, watch what you say. Because as soon as a reporter

A couple of things to watch out for:

1.) The reporter who "cuddles up." Sometimes your interviewer will take an intentionally informal tone to try to get you to drop your guard a little, to coax statements out of you that you might not make otherwise. Informality is fine, but it doesn't mean that you're off the record.

2.) Any mention of names or the names of other programs. Only talk about your own program, or if you refer to other programs do so only in vague and positive language.

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says "I'm calling from the Daily Herald," you are on the record.

Whenever the subject of tax dollars is mentioned, whenever you're asked to comment on the work of other programs, be aware that the reporter may not have only your best interests in mind.

Why do reporters/interviewers ask obvious questions?

Sometimes reporters and interviewers play dumb. The reason? Sometimes they actually don't know what you're talking about, but often they do know but they want *you* to say it. In real life, there might not be much point to a question like, for example, "How did you feel when the alligator climbed over the zoo wall and chased you all the way past the monkey house forcing you to take shelter in the abandoned concession stand?" But to a journalist, if you don't *say the words* "I was so scared. I've always been afraid of reptiles so this was my worst nightmare," they can't write them.

Remember that you are not talking to your peers in the literacy field. In fact, you're not even talking to this specific reporter: you're talking to a generalized public readership (or viewership or listenership), so keep your audience in mind. Avoid using unexplained acronyms, even those that are daily for you (up to and including 'ABLE'). Expect to spell out things that you might not spell out in a normal conversation: what it means to be functionally literate vs. illiterate, what the GED test is, what literacy education enables students to do and so on. You know the importance of these things, and with a successful interview, other people will begin to see their importance, too.

Tip: Television interviews are more dependent on memory than written interviews. It is of course acceptable to use notes in a television interview, but they should be used less on television than they might be in other media. Because of this, there's no way around it: to prepare for a television interview, you must *sit down in front of a mirror and talk to it*, answering imaginary questions and practicing steering the imaginary interview toward the subjects that you want to discuss.

Another thing about television: be aware of the sound-bite. Sound-bites are the units of TV. They're too short, they oversimplify, they're frustrating, but they're the way TV works, and you can use this. Be aware that whatever you say will be cut in half and in half again: make your point, and fast.

Any questions? Comments? Email Rob Mentzer at robertmentzer@msn.com or call the Ohio Literacy Network at 1-800-228-7323

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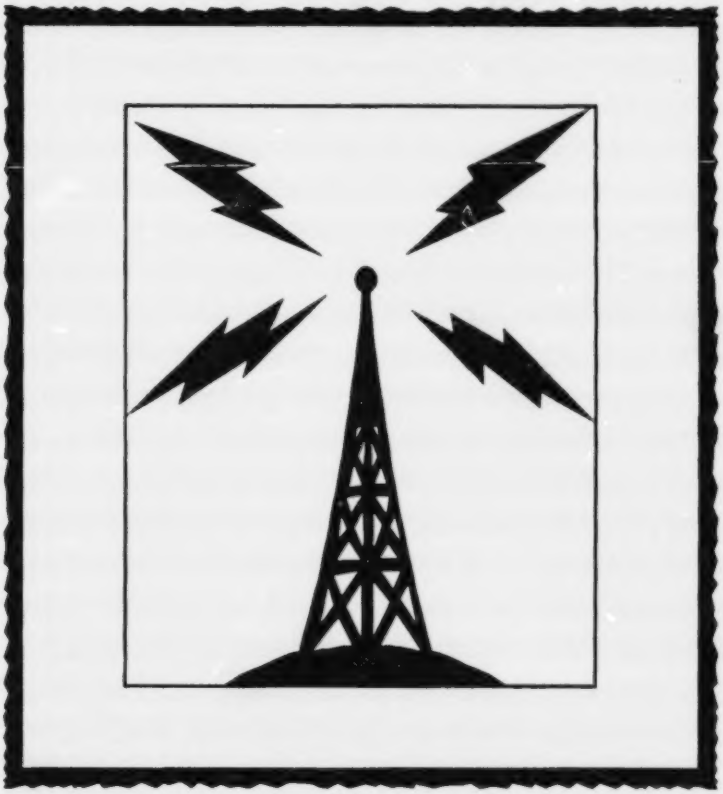

communication tips for adult basic & literacy education professionals

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chapter four

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—Other Ways of Getting the Word Out—

The first three chapters of *Getting the Word Out* focused on using traditional media outlets for publicity—newspapers, TV and radio. All of these forms of media can be used well and inexpensively, and the outcomes can be extremely effective in publicizing your program. However, while there are relatively few of these "major" media outlets in any one city, the possibilities for getting the word out about adult literacy are hardly limited to those outlets. In fact, by using creative approaches, your options are virtually endless. This, the final chapter of the new edition of *Getting the Word Out*, will provide information and ideas for other publicity-making possibilities.

Fliers:

Don't underestimate the power of a flier. They are the easiest of all publicity materials to produce: a one-sided sheet of paper photocopied, perhaps on colored paper, with a simple message about your program accompanied by contact information.

You can put fliers on:

- community bulletin boards at various local businesses,
- light posts, under the windshield wipers of cars, and on
- the *outside* of mailboxes (This is called "tubing." The inside of a mailbox is the property of the U.S. Postal Service, but most mailboxes have a clip of some sort on the outside for non-USPS materials, and this is fair play).

It's useful to have fliers on hand in your office; students often know others who could benefit from your services, and a flier is something concrete that can aid word-of-mouth publicity.

Some valuable contacts to cultivate:

- Have the editor of a local newspaper on your advisory board. Newspapers have a clear interest in supporting adult literacy, and a paper's editor will have valuable insights.
- Get in touch with someone who works actively in the campaign office of a political party. Their business is to get the word out, and they are likely to have compiled statistics about what works in your area, what it costs, and how to do it.
- Consider co-marketing with other agencies that serve similar populations. Arrange "trade-offs" where you display or distribute publicity materials for them, and they do the same for you.

A tip for fliers: if you design the kind of flier that has tear-off phone numbers at the bottom, tear off the first one yourself before you post it. Like the street performer who puts change in the hat, it encourages other people to do the same.

Billboards:

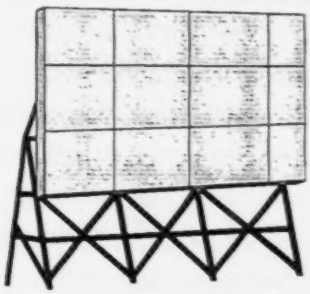
Billboard advertising is among the most expensive of options for getting the word out. On the other hand, a well-planned billboard purchase will expose your program to tens of thousands of people per day, and could generate hundreds of inquiries.

Like everything else, the costs of billboard advertising vary widely—$350/month was an average cost for a billboard visible from a highway route between Columbus and Dayton, but costs can be significantly lower or higher.

On the other hand, the companies who sell billboard advertising do not like to have empty space—once in a great while they will even *donate* empty billboard space to nonprofits. If a billboard in your area is empty, a phone number is usually listed, and may be worth a call.

Some billboard options to consider:

- Is the billboard illuminated?
- Is it visible from a highway or a city or rural street?
- By location, which populations are most likely to be exposed to it?
- In what direction is it visible? (A billboard only seen by people who are leaving town is of considerably less use to your program than one visible in your city.)



Once you've bought the space, of course, you'll need to buy the billboard itself—the printing as well as the vinyl to print it on. Printing generally costs between $300-$500. One representative said that once a billboard is printed, it can be put up and taken down multiple times with a lifespan of four or five years, and he noted that this cost was a "one-time fee."

Brochures:

A brochure is made by printing information on a single glossy paper and folding it twice. Quite a bit of information can be fit on this format, and the people who pick them up (in doctor's offices, schools, etc.) tend to be a particularly interested population. Fliers work on a broadcast strategy—they are seen by a large number of people, of whom only a few will be interested—while brochures, which are more expensive to produce, have the benefit of providing a more in-depth look to people who may have more than a passing interest in your program. Make sure that your brochures do not contain information that will become out of date quickly, so their life-span of a printing run isn't cut short.

Bulletins:

Many churches will include your program's contact information in their bulletins. This can be a good way to reach prospective students and especially volunteers for tutoring and other positions. Church bulletin boards are also a good place to post fliers, or display brochures.

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Bus-related advertising:

There are several types of bus-related advertising. Both are billboard-type ads, but they can be put in two different places: on the side of the bus itself or on the benches as bus-stops.

Benches: Bus-bench advertising is a relatively cheap way to get a type of billboard advertising. These billboards can be quite an effective way to reach a huge number of people in a short time. By doing some work selecting the specific locations of your bench-billboards, you can increase your program's ability to target specific populations. A typical nonprofit rate for multiple (5-10) bench-billboards would be $1,000 per month.

Bus billboards: Cities with much of a public transportation system usually sell the space on the side of their buses, creating a kind of eye-level moving billboard that drives around the city. This may seem like kind of a weird way to advertise, but you can't argue with the results: in Columbus, 300,000 people will see one of these signs in a month. Not surprisingly, costs run high: up to $2000/month. Cheaper ads are sometimes available on the back of the bus, and non-profit rates are the rule.

Inside the bus: Some transit systems also sell smaller (11" by 17") advertisements inside the bus. These are of course the cheapest, available for as little as $5.00 per sign.

Classified ads in "Help Wanted" section:

Contact your local newspapers to see if they'll provide you with a free one-line advertisement in their "Help Wanted" ads—job seekers will encounter your phone number at a time when they're already thinking about furthering their careers, and will be that much more likely to call.

Movie Theater ads:

Putting an ad in one of the pre-movie slide shows reaches a lot of people quickly, and although the companies that assemble these slide shows tend to be huge, they're able to localize to a surprising degree—down to the single screen, in fact. This is a useful method for reaching both prospective students and volunteers.

It's not cheap, but PSA rates can reduce the cost significantly. One representative said the normal advertising rate is $30 per screen, while their PSA rate (for nonprofits) neatly cuts that in half, to $15 per screen.

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Of course, you don't purchase just one screen. If you're advertising a special event, you'll want the slides to be shown 4-6 weeks in advance of the event. For less specific public awareness campaigns, you may wish to buy even more time. A typical package that is fairly localized (slides showing regularly at one or two theaters, targeting populations in a particular area of your city) may cost about $75 per week.

There is an additional $225 charge if the advertising service designs your slide for you, but this isn't a necessary expense. The service will provide a spec sheet on how to put together a screen ad and you can design it yourself or have it designed and put on a master slide for considerably cheaper—$20-$60, typically.

For more information on pre-movie slide advertising, contact your local theaters. Advertising and contact information for a couple of major chains is available at the following web sites:

www.cinemark.com/preshow.asp
www.amctheaters.com/theaters/advertising.html

Posters:

The poster is the larger, more colorfully presented cousin of the flier. People read posters while they stand in line or sit in waiting rooms. At most copy shops, posters are now printed digitally, which means the cost of printing them is most often measured per square foot, rather than by the number of posters being printed.

You will be expected to submit the design for the poster digitally (ideally, I was told, as a .pdf file, but other types of files will work; check with your local printer). Three or four square feet is probably large enough, with print large enough to be read at a distance.

- *Color posters:* using color can help you to design a poster that will catch and hold someone's attention: a photograph of a classroom scene, or colored lettering. Printing a color poster costs about $10 per square foot, so expect a cost of about $30-$40 per poster.

- *Black and white posters:* black and white images may be less eye-catching, but they can still be quite effective and they're quite a bit cheaper. At Kinko's, for example, a black and white poster cost just forty cents per square foot. Three to four square feet is a sufficient size, so in black and white a poster would cost only $1.20-$1.60 per poster!

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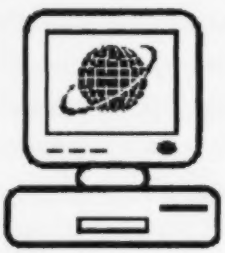
Table tents, place mats/tray liners, pizza boxes:

Every "for here" meal McDonald's serves comes on one of those brown plastic trays, and on top of that tray there is a tray-liner. It probably has a community calendar of some sort on it, and perhaps advertisements from local businesses and nonprofits. Is your program listed? Contact not just McDonald's but a wide range of local restaurants (and don't forget to include ethnic restaurants) about having your program's contact information listed on tray-liners, placemats, table tents, and anything else the restaurant's patrons encounter. Most restaurants that offer this kind of advertising have procedures already in place for processing these, and some will donate the space.

Similarly, many pizza places, including chains like Domino's and Papa John's, will post a small flier advertising your agency on top of their pizza boxes for no cost, if you provide the fliers. Consider what areas of town a local pizza place delivers to, and use pizza boxes as a way to reach potential students or potential volunteers.

Web site:



As a result of community computing efforts and changing times, more and more people from all parts of society are using the web. A web site and an email address are now almost as expected as a physical address or a post office box. Providing an in-depth discussion of what you'll need to build a good web site deserves its own publication (and there are many), but it's worth mentioning here in a nuts-and-bolts way:

Plan your site before you begin to build it: figure out the most important contact information and put it up front. Think of the front page of the web site as the online-equivalent of a billboard. Make it eye-catching and complete.

You'll need host space. Your Internet Service Provider may have some provisions for web space. Every web site has an address (ours is <www.ohioliteracynetwork.org>), called the domain. If possible, it is always best to have your site's address be the same as your program's name, so it's easy to remember. However, some servers will require your site to be listed after their server name (which would look something like this: <www.communitynet.org/literacy/oln>). The truth is that this type of server space makes for a more cumbersome address, but is frequently cheaper.

Make sure that your server provides you with "traffic reports"—reports of the number of people who visit your site and at what time they're most likely to do it. Traffic reports will help you to measure impact.

An online source for some basic tutorials about web sites is available at <www.learnthenet.com>.

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...and last, but certainly not least:

Presentations to Civic and Community Groups:

When all is said and done, the reason your program exists is the same reason for marketing it and getting the word out: the *students*. No matter where you live, there are people who don't know about your program—and there are many others who don't know *enough* about it, who haven't yet heard enough about the real impact that your services can have. And sometimes they're the ones who could benefit from adult education programs the most.

Because what adult literacy programs do is provide a service, there's no reason to market yourselves as if you're selling shoes or used cars. Sometimes the way to get the word out is to broadcast it as widely as possible—but in the same way that you strive to make your services as personal as you can, your presence in the community must be followed up by a deeper, more personal approach.

Your greatest resource is your community; your most effective marketing can be word-of-mouth. As you form genuine relationships with members of the community—media and politicians, sure, but also current and former students and tutors, neighbors, other agencies—your program will become even more effective.

It is essential to being a part of the community that you hold open houses and events, that you speak at the events of civic groups and lend your support to other community organizations, and that you be available to answer questions from those who have them. In the end, the students are the reason that we exist, and it is the students who will benefit from your program's efforts in getting the word out.

Any questions? Comments? Email
Rob Mentzer at robertmentzer@msn.com
or call the Ohio Literacy Network at
1-800-228-7323

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